SPEECH

OF

HON. M. R. H. GARNETT,

OF VIRGINIA.

ON

THE STATE OF THE UNION,

DELIVERED IN

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SPEECH.

Mr. GARNETT rose and said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: On the first day of this session, the House ordered the appointment of a committee, to be composed of one member from each State, to consider the alarming condition of the country. Since then, it has been contented to stand with folded arms and silent lips, while the flames of civil discord daily burnt more fiercely, though it has long since been apparent that the committee can do nothing to arrest them. And when the history of these times comes to be written, I think the stolid indifference of the American House of Representatives to the dissolution of the American Union will be recorded as one of their strangest phenomena. State after State secedes; and yet, though the minute guns successively announce that spar by spar, and timber by timber, the mighty ship gives way before the storm, we still stand, like mere spectators on the shore, in helpless bewilderment. I think it time to address ourselves earnestly to the danger: not with anger, or bitterness, or exaggeration, but with a frank, truthful interchange of views, ascending above the horizon of party, as men upon whom Providence has cast the fearful responsibilities belonging to those exceptional occasions in a nation's life, which determine its destinies, and affect the course of the world's history for generations yet unborn. It is in this spirit, sir, that I enter the debate.

He who traces back the present troubles only to the 6th day of November last, would be but a shallow observer. Their causes are to be found, not in the mere election of Lincoln and Hamlin, but in the fact which that election disclosed: that this once equal Union of sovereign Republics had changed into the dominion of one section over another section, into which it was divided by differences of character, of institutions, and in some sort, of race, coinciding with a geographical line. This revolution is not the less complete, because, as in Rome under Augustus, the old forms and names of the Constitution are preserved. Such great historical changes are never sudden; nor is this an exception.

In years past, the anti-slavery party had, after many vicissitudes of forture, broken down the great historic party of the Whigs, and the even stronger, though more ephemeral, organization of the Know Nothings; but now it has burst through the last line of our defences, and, routing the Democratic forces, it has seized the sceptre of American empire—the object of its long ambition, of its patient toil. Under the name of Republicans, it has obtained every electoral vote, except three, in the eighteen non-slaveholding States, against and over the unanimous voice of the fifteen slaveholding States. Nor is its majority in electoral votes only. Its popular vote is one million eight hundred and thirty-one thousand one hundred and sixty-eight, against one million five hundred and seventy-four thousand and ninety-one. It has a plurality of the popular vote in Oregon and California, and an absolute majority in every northern State this side of the Rocky Mountains except gallant New Jersey, where alone it was beaten. Nor is this strength a thing of yesterday—a summer cloud which we may hope will pass away as rapidly as it gathered. Since the anti-slavery candidate, Birney, received seven thousand and fifty-nine votes in 1840, each presidential election has shown a steady growth in the party vote, except in 1852, when it met an accidental and temporary check. The intermediate State elections show the same progression.

This party, then, now calling itself Republican, has steadily advanced for

many years, until it has gained possession of all the northern States, in every department of their State governments, with very few exceptions. It controls this House of Representatives; and after the 4th of March there will be thirty avowed Republican Senators, besides two from Kansas, if admitted—within two or five, as the case may be, of a majority of the Senate, were all the southern States still in the Union. Nor can there be a doubt that nothing but the accidental length of the terms of the remaining six Democratic Senators from the North prevents our then seeing every northern State represented by Republicans. It cannot be long before the entire legislative as well as the executive department of the Federal Government is in possession of this party, unless some mighty change occurs in northern sentiment. Nor can we expect such a change from ordinary causes: for schools, pulpits, and books, have trained the northern mind to a strong and fixed hostility to African slavery; and this is precisely the feeling on which the Republican party is founded. Anti-slavery: this is its central idea, its vital principle, without which it never could have come into being, and without which it would now dissolve. Here is its tower of strength, and it has flourished just in proportion as it has been true to this flag. Around it may be grouped camp-followers and mercenaries, always attendant on victory; the various factions, each with its individual purpose, which it hopes to promote under the shadow of its great leader. But the heart of the party, its active, progressive element, which interpenetrates all others, and moulds and controls them to its purpose; which gives it vigor in the fight, and rallies popular enthusiasm to its cause, is the anti-slavery sentiment. As Mr. SEWARD said:

"The secret of its success lies in the fact that it is a party of one idea; but that idea is a noble one, an idea that fills and expands all generous souls—the idea of equality, the equality of all men before human tribunals and human laws, as they all are equal before the Divine tribunal and Divine laws."

Yes, sir, the Republican party is made up from the disbanded cohorts of the former Whig and American parties, and deserters from the Democratic, brought together by this one common feeling. As Mr. Lincoln himself said, "the Republican party is made up of those who, as far as they can, peaceably oppose the extension of slavery, and who will hope for its ultimate extinction." "It is made," he says, "of strange, discordant, and even hostile elements," all fused and disciplined into one strong body by enmity to slavery. More emphatically still, Mr. Lincoln says:

"The real issue in this controversy—the one pressing upon every mind—is the sentiment on the part of one class that looks upon the institution of slavery *as a wrong*, and of another class that *does not* look upon it as a wrong. The sentiment that contemplates the institution of slavery in this country as a wrong, is the sentiment of the Republican party. It is the sentiment around which all their actions, all their arguments, circle; from which all their propositions radiate. They look upon it as being a moral, social, and political wrong." * * * * "They insist that it should, as far as may be, *be treated* as a wrong; and one of the methods of treating it as a wrong, is to *make provision that it shall grow no larger*. They also desire a policy that looks to a peaceful end of slavery at some time, as being wrong."

The official platforms of the party confirm these declarations of its leader. It was first organized because no existing party made anti-slavery opinions a test in its nominations. The Abolition or Liberty party of 1840–44 was succeeded by the so-called "Free Democratic party," or Buffalo men of 1848–52. Meantime the Whig party had been dissolved by dissension between its northern and southern wings on this same question of slavery; and a like fate befell its successor—the American party. Its northern elements uniting with this "Free Democracy" on the anti-slavery idea, cast over one million three hundred thousand votes, as Republicans, in 1856; and have now elected their President. Like every great party, it contains men of various shades of opinion, more or less extreme; but, as in all such cases, the extreme men, those who carry the leading idea of the party to its logical consequences, and are truest to it, must ultimately govern and control the others. Even the most moderate are determined to prevent the extension of slavery into any Federal territory, because they consider it a moral, social, and political wrong and evil, which they are bound, to the extent of their power, to limit and discourage.

As Mr. Lincoln says, any man "who does not think the institution of slavery wrong;" who does not "desire a policy that looks to a peaceful end of slavery at some time, as being wrong;" who does not "insist that it shall be treated as a wrong," is "misplaced, and ought not to be with the Republicans."

Now, sir, it will be admitted that it is impossible for the people of any southern State to adopt these opinions without at the same time making up their minds to the emancipation, more or less speedy, of their slaves. In other words, it is impossible for any southern people to join the Republican party without commencing a total revolution in their internal State policy and social organization. Therefore it is, sir, that we justly charge the Republicans with sectionalism. That surely is a sectional party, which the people in fifteen States of the Union cannot join without committing themselves to a radical change in their State constitutions, and a complete overthrow of the entire structure of their society. So long as there are slaveholding States which mean to continue slaveholding States, so long must the domination of this party be the domination of the non-slaveholding over the slaveholding section. The former will enjoy all the offices and honors of the Confederacy, except such inferior places as may be bestowed on time-servers or traitors in the South. The sectional majority will wield the entire power of the Union, direct its foreign alliances, levy its taxes, hold the keys of the Treasury, and the gates of war and peace—the purse and the sword—command its armies and navies, govern its Territories, and control its destinies. The minority section will pay its taxes, but direct neither their kind, their amount, nor their appropriation. It will help to fight your battles, and to extend the boundaries of your confederacy; but yours will be the sole gain, for the new territory will be appropriated by the majority section for its emigration and settlement, and its new States whose stars appear in the constellation of the Union will do homage to the institutions of that section, and be so many pillars of its political supremacy. Meantime, the minority section will be in a minority more and more hopeless. Southern civilization will be walled in and isolated beyond hope of escape, and the enormous pressure of this huge Federal machine, its patronage and power and moral influence, brought down on southern society to bring about the extinction of slavery.

I think I do not color the picture too highly. I will suppose that the so-called *moderate* wing of the Republican party prevails in its councils. I will suppose that no direct attack is made on the sale of slaves between the States, or on slavery in the States, or even in the forts, navy-yards, or District of Columbia. I will admit, for the argument's sake, that the Republican party is content to confine slavery within its present limits, and prevent its extension into any new territory. It necessarily follows that there can never be a new slave State. Our present territory, over one million two hundred thousand square miles, is large enough for twenty States; and we must expect, moreover, large acquisitions from Mexico. The chief present restraint on the lust of acquisition is sectional jealousy, and this would not be felt when one section is all-powerful. Its ambition would scarcely be checked by the cost, whether in blood or treasure, of wars and treaties, whose fruits were to be exclusively its own, for it would levy the greater part of the expense from the subject and minority section. Mr. SEWARD, in the recent canvass, repeatedly foreshadowed this policy of acquisition for the exclusive occupation of northern society. The time is not far distant when you would have three-fourth of the States, and could amend the Constitution at pleasure.

But the moderate Republicans tell us that they interfere with slavery only where they have the power, because conscience commands the abatement of this wrong wherever the power exists. How then, when future extensions invest you with a power over the institution in the States themselves? That same conscience will not allow you to rest until you have taken measures for its ultimate extinction. You are eager for the day when you shall have filled up the western territory with free States, and you may number the requisite three-fourths. When, in 1820, you interdicted slavery in all the territory north of 36° 30′, you simultaneously reduced the price of the public lands from two dol-

lars to a dollar and a quarter, in order to stimulate emigration and hasten the formation of new States. Now, when you think you have finally secured all the Territories, present and future, you incorporate into your platform, as a principal measure of your party, the homestead bill. You invite all the nations of Europe to take possession of the Federal lands without cost; and by this donation you encourage and increase to the utmost foreign immigration, already numbering annually more than enough for a new State every year.

Meanwhile, the Republican party is necessarily confined to the non-slaveholding section; since, as I have remarked, no slaveholding community can join it without ultimately surrendering its institutions. But how long can any people maintain a struggle which it feels daily more hopeless? How long keep up its spirit under the degrading influence of subjection to a Government from whose power and honors it is perpetually excluded? The strength of the defence, the spirit of resistance, would gradually weaken. Ambitious and active tempers—some, allured by the power or distinctions, others by the mere emoluments of office—would first profess a policy of acquiescence, and then an adoption of those Republican principles which open the door to preferment. Anti-slavery doctrines and emancipation parties would appear in the slave States, and the dominant and sectional party in the Federal Government would, of necessity, aid and strengthen them by its patronage and influence. Meantime the dominant section, selfish as all unchecked power must be, would, by protective tariffs and sectional expenditures, encourage its own labor, and render the labor of the slaves comparatively worthless. Thus the institution of slavery in the minority section would be "localized and discouraged," to use the Republican phrase. Undermined and weakened, and its defenders dispirited or divided, it would probably give way, even before the increase in the number of the free States placed its constitutional defences at their mercy.

Thus far I have traced the results of Republican rule, on the assumption that it is exercised by the most moderate members of the party. But such an assumption is contradicted by all history. The law of life in every party is fidelity to the idea which gave it existence. If the leaders falter, aspirants for place thrust them aside with professions of more extreme opinions. The responsibility of power, it is true, moderates its possessors; but in a popular Government, based on universal suffrage, such moderation is short-lived. The real power is in the popular masses, who feel none of its responsibilities. At the North the old Federalist leaven is widely diffused, and is especially strong in the Republican ranks. Accustomed to construe the Constitution most liberally for power, they will perpetually press their Representatives to use it against what they deem the monstrous evil of slavery. They claim power to abolish it in the forts and the navy-yards, and to prohibit the sale of slaves between the States, or their transportation on the high seas; and excited by victory, and goaded on by a fanatical pulpit, this power will surely be used—used when the southern people, discouraged by subjection and divided by patronage, are too weak to resist.

The inevitable end is the emancipation of the African race at the South. When will this happen? Thirty years hence, when the slaves number eight millions; or sixty years, when they are sixteen millions; or ninety years, when their thirty two millions outnumber the present total population of all the States? Be it when it may, (and the longer it is delayed the more numerous the slaves, the worse will be the consequences when it occurs,) the destruction of southern wealth and industry will be almost complete; for the experiment in the British West Indies has proved beyond controversy—what indeed well-informed persons knew before—that the African will not work without compulsion. You may substitute the slavery of the law—bondage to the community—a system of labor enforced and regulated by legal enactment—for slavery to individual masters; but you will get not half work; and in destroying the personal and hereditary tie between master and slave, you have destroyed not only that which makes the industry profitable, but still more, you have broken up the essential condition on which all that is humane or good in the relation depends. I will not dilate on the incalculable loss to the North or to the world

involved in the ruin of the cotton culture and southern commerce and industry My interests are nearer home, where I see a country once animated by peaceful industry, once blessed with happy homes, once advancing under the control of the white race, men proud of their position as peers of any under God's heaven,—I see this country, its industry extinguished, its homes deserted by the rich, its fields overgrown by the thicket, and abandoned to the improvident laziness of the emancipated African, while the poorer class are left to reconcile themselves as best they may to social and political equality, and ultimate amalgamation with the free blacks. In one word, I see the southern States, I see Virginia and her southern sisters and daughters, reduced to the condition of Jamaica and Hayti, and blotted from the roll of nations.

I ask you, sir—I ask any fair man, whether from North or South—can we, ought we to acquiesce in this result? or shall we try to avert it while there is yet time? Yet this ruin is the legitimate, the inexorable consequence of acquiescence in Republican rule, as I have shown.

How can we avert the danger? Shall we trust to a change in the northern mind? But on what grounds shall we hope for such a change? A change means, really, not the mere overthrow of the Republican party, but in that anti-slavery sentiment which created it, and which would then create another in its stead, as Mr. SEWARD truly said.

Truth is mighty, and will prevail; but Truth is proverbially a slow traveller, and before you can hope to work such a change at the North by ordinary causes, the evil will have been done, and our ruin accomplished. Past history shows that the present working of our political machinery has been favorable to the growth of this anti-slavery power. Twenty-five years ago it was not tolerated at the North itself; its public meetings were broken up by mobs; its printing offices burned down; and northern Governors recommended its repression by legal enactment. How changed the scene now, when it controls nearly every department of Government, State and Federal; and when conspiracies are formed for the armed invasion of sister States, and neither laws proposed nor indictments found to punish the conspirators! Here is a change indeed, but a change against, not for us—the only change, I fear, we can hope. I ask no better proof of the firm hold this anti-slavery feeling has on the northern heart, than the recent disruption of the Democratic party, which was clearly due to the general aversion to slavery, and the determination that it shall not be extended to any new territory. How could it be otherwise? Or how can we hope to obtain even a hearing there? A few in the cities may listen to us; but the rural millions, how can we reach them? The schools, the pulpits, and the press, all their literature and all their teachers, daily impress on their minds the impolicy and sinfulness of slavery. Some urge active measures to remedy this wrong; others would separate the practice from the principle—a caution not easily taught to a conscientious and active people of the Puritan stock. These sons of the Mayflower will never rest easy under a conviction of their neighbor's sins, without aggressive efforts for his compulsory salvation.

Mr. Calhoun, as long ago as 1833, predicted that this anti-slavery feeling would dissolve all parties formed on other issues. And were it possible to restore the old Whig and Democratic parties, the history of the last twenty years would be repeated more quickly. This consequence necessarily results from the organization of political society at the North. In populous communities, where all are of the same race, and universal suffrage and apportionment of representation on mere numbers prevail, the Democracy necessarily becomes a government, or rather, a despotism of the numerical majority. There are many who have to labor too severely for their daily subsistence to devote much attention to political affairs, or to acquire that training which is necessary to freemen for an intelligent judgment of the issues of the day. Many votes are controlled in great part by patronage and money, directly or indirectly used. Where parties are nicely balanced, that will be successful which commands the largest influences of this corrupting kind. Hence party contests are chiefly for the spoils; and there is a constant tendency to increase the number of offices, the amount of expenditures, and contracts, and jobs—in one word, to swell the

spoils. In this state of things, when a party appears like the original anti-slavery party, animated by fanatical zeal for a single idea, each of the great divisions of the spoils parties of necessity begins to bid for its vote, and, instead of resisting, to yield to its errors. Thus its principles are gradually diffused through the masses, until at last, adopted openly by one of the regular parties, they conduct it to victory, and gain for it the coveted spoils. Meantime, the educated and conservative classes, with a few honorable exceptions, give way to an unfortunate but natural disgust for political contests conducted by such low arts, and determined by such unworthy means. They, the natural leaders of society, withdraw themselves from public affairs. They grumble at, but pay, the enormous taxes which support extravagant municipal and State expenditures. They forget politics, except on rare occasions, and are contented to accumulate wealth, to exhaust invention in new modes of luxury, or to indulge as *dilettanti* in art or literature. The vulgar concerns of Government are left, for the most part, to political intrigues, and corrupt caucuses, which control the rowdies and the ignorant.

How strikingly does every day's experience verify this reasoning! How different from the men of old is the race of men who now appear in our public councils! How inordinately have our expenditures increased! How little regard is shown, or even professed, for the letter of the Constitution! In fact, how few even know what it is! How corrupt is our Government in nearly all its branches; and how little northern constituencies seem to care for it! Congress is reduced to the open shame of accusing and expelling its own members for corruption, to be re-elected, however, soon after. Scarcely a claim is allowed, or an appropriation made, without the taint of suspicion; and the army militant of contract-jobbers and office-seekers, in national conventions, make the Presidency itself almost as much a subject of traffic as was the Roman empire in the days of Didius Julianus.

A few years since, in Wisconsin, Legislature, Governor, and Judges, stood convicted of corruption so universal, that there was none left to punish it. The New York press, of all parties, is unanimous about one thing only—the superlative corruption of their municipal Government, and of their Legislature. But this unanimous sentiment does not avail to change either, for they are the governments of mere numbers, working by universal suffrage in a community where, according to the official report of the Secretary of State, in 1858, of the whole population one in every sixty-four was the inmate of an almshouse, and one in every thirteen and a half in a condition to require relief from Government officials. It must have been to such governments that Mr. SEWARD referred when he said, in his recent Astor House speech, that not a State could maintain its organization without the conservative influence of the Federal Government.

It is vain, therefore, to expect safety from a change of parties at the North.

Still less is the remedy for our present troubles to be found in any mere legislation by Congress, or even in a repeal of the obnoxious personal liberty statutes of the northern States, except it were evidence of a change of opinion as to slavery. The present fugitive slave law is stringent enough, were the hearts of the people inclined to obey it. How far they are the contrary, the obnoxious personal Liberty Bills, the forcible rescue of captured fugitives, the personal peril of masters who claim their property, and the continual retreat of slave population from the border line, where it is exposed to increasing hazards, all witness. Nor can we hope for the peaceful and regular return of our fugitives, or the suppression of organized conspiracies to aid and stimulate their escape, so long as the northern heart and conscience are so deeply impressed with the anti-slavery idea.

But, sir, I go farther, and assert that it is not for the interest of either party or section to leave this question open. The continual struggle cannot longer be endured. It swallows up all others; makes wise legislation on other subjects impossible; paralyzes every department of the Government; and breeds hatred, ever growing in intensity, between the sections. For the interest of both, it ought now to be finally settled. And for the South, especially, it is neither safe nor honorable to depend for security on the mercy of the North,

or the vicissitudes of party warfare. The fifteen southern States cannot safely or honorably hold their four million African slaves, their social and political institutions, by the forbearance of the eighteen northern. I think, therefore, that the people of the South have judged wisely, when they accept the recent election as proof that the time, long foreseen, has at last arrived, when, the machinery of party having become impotent for their protection, they must look elsewhere for safety. And in pronouncing this judgment, I would say to our conservative friends at the North, whether of the Democratic or Bell party, that we fully appreciate their gallant services in defence of our rights under the Constitution. We admire their constancy under defeat, and their moral courage in boldly fighting against increasing odds; and we shall regret that our safety does not permit us to await the chances of other and future battles in conjunction with such noble allies. But we plainly see—and we are sure their own candor will admit—that the game would be too hazardous for such momentous stakes. Even an occasional party success would but delay for a short time the inevitable crisis now upon us; and it would then be likely to find us weakened, divided, and less able to meet it. On the contrary, we beg them to see that it is the part of prudence to be timely bold, and now, once and forever, to remove these vexed and dangerous interests from the slippery arena of party strife.

The public mind, agreeing with these views, is evidently disposed to seek a remedy in amendments to the Constitution, which would place the whole subject outside of Federal control. There are two kinds of amendments possible—the one, consisting of declarations that Congress shall or shall not exercise certain powers; the other, making a new distribution of power between the sections.

I do not look very hopefully on the former. For the most part, promises without the power to enforce the performance, are not worth much. And if such amendments succeed in closing the controversy on the issues now prominent, yet who can foresee the various forms in which the anti-slavery feeling will make its future attacks? How can amendments of this character secure the South effectually against the malign influences of the patronage of the anti slavery party? How can they obtain for her a fair share in the honors, the influence, and the expansion of our empire? Yet I do not commit myself against a present settlement on this basis. It is the part of practical statesmanship to meet questions as they arise; and though the settlement might be only a truce, yet if good as far as it goes, and if the end of the truce on such a basis would probably find the relative strength of the parties unchanged, if its terms did not demoralize the spirit of my own section, I would be disposed to accept it. At the same time, I believe a more radical and therefore more permanent adjustment would be better for both sections, the North as well as the South.

The present Constitution, as our fathers made it, was all sufficient, while it protected kindred and friendly States, and would be so still, were all disposed to fulfill its obligations with a good faith, inspired by mutual good will and respect. There is danger that new declaratory clauses or promises would be regarded no more than the old. What the minority section needs is *power*—power to secure its rights against a majority section, differing in opinions and institutions, and animated by fixed hostility to those of the minority. The danger to the minority is not only in hostile legislation, but in a hostile use of Federal patronage and influence, and in the absence of such positive protection as its interests may require, whether in our foreign relations, in expansion by territorial acquisitions, or in forming new States by colonization in such acquisitions. To secure all this, the South must have an absolute veto in every department of the Government It has now become, by the force of events, a Union of Sections. It is to be determined whether this shall be a Union of superior and inferior Sections, or of equal Sections. Any permanent radical settlement of the present difficulties must recognize the fact, now manifest to all the world, whether we choose to recognize it or not, that this Union is composed of two widely-differing Sections; and to secure to each its rights and its

fair share of the benefits of the Union, every act of the Government must depend on the consent of both. For a self-protecting power in every great interest of the community is the fundamental principle of every free Government that has ever endured. Neither the North nor the South can require the other to abandon its opposite opinions on the subject of slavery. Let each enjoy its own sentiments. Let the North condemn and the South approve African slavery. But let both remember that the only safe Union between powerful States, where such opposite opinions exist, is an absolute equality. And in conceding such a change, what would the North concede? Nothing—literally nothing, but the right to govern us. It would not even involve that *quasi*-recognition of slavery, which the Republicans make a chief objection to various moderate propositions, Mr. CRITTENDEN'S and others. Surely in the nineteenth century, and here among this chosen people, "foremost in the files of time" in vindicating for every nation the right of self-government, there can be no great sacrifice in a settlement which secures that inestimable privilege to either Section of the Confederacy.

But, sir, how can we obtain these, or any amendments, to the Constitution, in time to avert the present danger? Two-thirds of Congress may propose amendments, or a Convention of the States may propose them; but this Convention can only be called on the invitation of the several States. In either case, the amendments must be ratified by three-fourths of the States. The process is very slow under the best circumstances; how much slower with concealed or open opposition of very many! Can we hope that the Republicans, who control the northern Legislatures, as well as this House and more than a third of the Senate, will consent? I agree that true wisdom and patriotism might lead them to such counsels; and even without renouncing their peculiar anti-slavery tenets, they might bow before the inevitable necessity of events, and, acknowledging the impossibility of holding the South in vassalage, might acquiesce in such a division of power as I have suggested. But their recent votes and speeches show but too plainly that no such prudence and justice can be expected. They fancy that they have secured a long tenure of the coveted spoils and power, and that to consent to any change is to confess that they have been wrong. If pride of opinion or selfish ambition prevent the present holders of power from agreeing to such just compromises as may rebuild the Union, perhaps a popular election would expel them from their places, and substitute for them men of larger and more patriotic views. But this would be a work of time, and meantime the building is falling to pieces over our heads. Nor can it be accomplished, even when new elections offer the opportunities, if the people of the North have any reason to distrust our sincerity or earnestness of purpose. Their Republican leaders have sedulously taught them that our warnings were empty gasconade, and that the Union was in no danger, and therefore they have never seriously considered demands which they did not believe the South was very serious in pressing.

But their attention is at last roused by the imminent perils of the country; and a hearing, I would hope, is secured. They may say to themselves that it is better to repair our shattered Union; it is more magnanimous and worthier Americans and American principles to agree that any considerable portion of our fellow countrymen, who really so desire, shall govern themselves than to insist on governing them; and that the South shall have the equality she values so highly. Such a concession, if concession it be, is wiser and more honorable than to destroy the Union in the pursuit of a bootless tyranny of one section over another. I would willingly hope, sir, that the northern people might thus feel and reason. But if so, it would be a great change since last fall; and that, because situation of affairs has changed; because actual disunion has at last convinced them that the South, whether rightly or wrongly, does truly believe herself aggrieved, and her safety and equality and honor imperilled by the dominant anti-slavery sentiment of the North, and is prepared, in their defence, to abandon whatever advantages there may have been in the Union, and to risk fortune and life itself. It will be because the northern people, then, in no unworthy or craven spirit, but in true love for Union, and mindful of frater-

nal blood, will yield what really costs them nothing, to the earnest convictions of the South—will yield what they did not take the pains to consider, while they believed that the South was insincere, and playing a mere party game in her demands. Therefore, for the South to postpone action for such a change in northern Legislatures, in next fall's elections, as may give a majority in favor of proper amendments to the Constitution, is not only to expose herself to all the chances of division and discouragement at home, but it is to abandon the only course that can convince the North of her sincerity, or give to conservative men there the strength to carry those measures which the extreme men in power would a short time since have refused even to consider.

Meantime Virginia, my own State, has called a convention of her people in their sovereign capacity, for the 13th of February, which will decide her future course. She has been, she still is, sincerely attached to the Union; she would gladly have preserved it; she would willingly reconstruct it. Not long since, she would have accepted, and advised her southern sister States to accept, a most moderate basis of settlement. But events daily strengthen the feeling for secession. Your defiant speeches, and still more insulting indifference, your threats of military coercion, inflame her people; your rejection of all compromises induces the belief that you are determined to rule, if need be, by the sword; and as this belief grows into conviction, so rises Virginia's estimate of the conditions which would make this a safe Union for the South. And let no man doubt where she would be in the final disruption.

She will join no border State Confederacy, with two frontiers to defend, instead of one, cut off from the natural outlet for her emigration in the South, and with all the territorial and slavery controversies in the new Union, which drove her out of the old.

Still less can she, or the border slave States, remain in the northern Confederacy. If the fifteen southern States were unsafe in the old Union, how would the eight border States fare in the new Union, with nineteen free States? How then would they resist the sectional taxation and appropriations, the commercial and fiscal systems, which, even in the former Union, have built up northern cities, and fostered northern industry at the expense of the agricultural labor of the South? If permitted to keep their slaves, what would become of their increasing population, shut out from the Territories by the northern Government, and perhaps from the South by its Confederacy?

The picture would be reversed for these States in a southern Confederacy, and especially for Virginia, the oldest and the largest, whether she considers her material interests or the ties of blood which bind her to her children, scattered in thousands over the entire South. Virginia can never hesitate between being the leading State of a southern Confederacy, or the dependent follower of a northern. The great statesman of the Republican party traced its lineage to Plymouth rock, and celebrated its victory as the triumph of the Massachusetts school of politics. He was right. Plymouth and Jamestown, the Puritans and the Cavaliers, Massachusetts and Virginia, are the great origins of the opposite systems of American policy and society. You of the North seem to prefer the Massachusetts school, as you have a right. It rests on the infallibility of majorities—the divine right of the greater number to rule absolutely the lesser. It cares more to strengthen the community than it fears to dwarf the individual. Its ultimate tendency is to depend more on Government and less on individual wisdom or energy; and its final word must be a despotism of mere numbers under a military dictatorship, after the French model. The Virginia school, on the contrary, is more English. It reduces government to its *minimum* of power, and relies upon the powers of the individual man for its strength, its prosperity, and its glory. Its motto is, not the Benthamite heresy of the greatest good of the greatest number, but the greatest good of all. Founding its society on the subordination of an inferior to a superior race, it would combine the lofty spirit and culture of an aristocracy with the equality of a democracy. If Virginia could forget her material interests, she could never forego, for her sons, the interests of empire. She will never consent to close for them the possibility of playing their equal part in the drama of civilization. She knows that

to her school of politics this Union owes its Constitution and its noblest achievements; and that whenever the Massachusetts school prevailed, whether under the elder or younger Adams, as at present, the country was brought to the verge of ruin. Hers were the Eastern portals whence the dawning day called forth that morning of American greatness—

> ——"whose brightness broad hath blazed;
> Whose glorious, glittering light hath all men's eyes amazed."

She will never abandon her principles, or those southern States which, sprung from her loins and formed in her similitude, have multiplied her honors, and endowed the Old Dominion with a youth ever new.

But, sir, I have wandered from the strict line of my argument. I have endeavored to show that the real cause of the present difficulties is the difference between the social systems of the North and South, and the aggressive character of the anti-slavery sentiment that controls the former, and which has made the Union the Union of a dominant and a subject section; that the South would have sought a remedy in constitutional amendments, had you of the Republican party shown any disposition to give them. But your hearts are hardened like Pharoah's in your pride, and the South could not safely await the slow and uncertain chances of new and distant elections. Some of her States have resorted to the only remaining course—an exercise of the right of secession, withdrawing from the Union in the same manner and by the same authority they entered it. And thus, whether you acknowledge it or not, the Union is dissolved. For, even if you resort to civil war, that very war is in itself an end of the Union as a union between equal States; but with peace, reunion becomes possible.

Peace, sir, means reconstruction; it means Union, in some form or other, while force is war, and inevitable, eternal separation. After bloodshed, and all the evil passions and bitter hatreds which must follow, it would be vain to hope for any reunion. I cannot believe that many are to be found who really wish for the untold woes that follow in the train of civil war. There may be a few fanatical, or wicked men, whose vindictive natures would revel in the blood of their countrymen; but I trust that most of those whose sullen indifference now threatens to bring these misfortunes upon all, are acting blindly. They deceive themselves with words. They talk of the enforcement of the laws, and are obstinately blind to the fact that this euphonious phrase is, under present circumstances, but another name for civil war. When you undertake this enforcement in South Carolina, or the other seceding States, you will find yourself met by constitutional obstacles on every hand, as was well shown in another place by Mr. BENJAMIN and Judge DOUGLAS.

In 1832, the case was very different; then the State undertook to nullify only a part of the Federal laws; in all other respects she acknowledged Federal authority, and her own people were divided into your enemies and your friends. Now, your authority is in all respects denied; the people are unanimous against you; you have no party; no officers; neither courts nor juries. How, then, will you set about this enforcement of the laws; this sworn duty as you call it, which, however, you are willing to neglect in all regards except the collection of taxes? You answer, by holding the forts and blockading the coast. But, if this blockade is to be considered as an act of peace, where is your warrant in the Constitution? How hypocritical will seem your zeal to enforce the laws, when your first act is to violate that plain provision of the supreme law, which declares that vessels bound to or from one State, shall not be obliged to enter, clear, or pay duties in another? Or, if you wrested the authority by considering your blockade an act of war, then the true character of your pretended enforcement of the laws is revealed; you are at war, and being at war, you have acknowledged the government of the seceding State, at least, as a *de facto* government, the very acknowledgment you now refuse to make for the purposes of peace.

But, sir, is such a blockade possible? I will suppose you have the naval force necessary, and the revenues, without resorting to loans or direct taxes, to

maintain it. I will suppose the Southern people quietly submit to it for a year; and imagine not that their hearts would grow weary, or fail them, once embarked in the great cause. They are the sons of men who endured and suffered under the entire military power of England for ten years, and by endurance came out conquerors. During that period of blockade they would have abundant provisions; for every man who has studied the statistics of the country knows that the South produces more food, in proportion to her population, than the North. For her, it would be the loss of income only; and while her cotton was thus held up for a single year, what would be the consequences to New England, whose whole supply is drawn from the South; to France, where southern cotton furnishes employment directly to some two hundred and seventy thousand persons, and indirectly to more than a million? Above all, what would be the effect of this withdrawal from Great Britain of three-fourths of the cotton she uses, upon which, as the London Times lately estimated, four millions of her people depend for daily bread? Rely upon it, sir, that, bitter and unreasonable as her prejudices may be, the same causes which have reconciled England to the use of slave-grown sugar and cotton, would never suffer either France or herself to acquiesce in this blockade. The South need only wait patiently and silently, with absolute assurance that those great Powers would be forced to an active interference. And then, sir, how would you conduct the war!

No course would be open to you but actual invasion, which, indeed, passion and resistance would probably bring about at a much earlier period. Invasion, sir! invasion of what? and under what conditions? Of an agricultural country eight hundred and fifty-one thousand square miles in extent, larger than all the empires and kingdoms of central Europe, yet with only about fourteen inhabitants to the square mile, and consequently without large cities or means to sustain an invading host; but, sir, not without brave men, trained to the use of arms, and ready to destroy the invading army, which would melt away like snows of winter every mile as they advanced into the southern clime, far from their resources. Napoleon, in his disastrous Russian invasion, was not so far from his supplies, and in a country twice as densely peopled, twice as able to sustain him. Your population may outnumber ours by millions; but you would be hundreds of miles from your true base of operations, while we would be at home. You are doubtless as brave as we are, though not more so; but your soldiers would be led on by the unhallowed lust to bring brothers beneath their yoke, while ours would strike for their homes and their altars. I know that fanatics daily depreciate to the northern people the exertions of the South in the Revolution, and teach that, as slaveholding is the sum of all human villainies, so is it the source of incurable weakness and impotence. But before they believe such teachers, let them read history. Let them remember that the words of that noble epitaph at Thermopylæ: "Go, stranger, and tell our countrymen that we lie here in obedience to her laws," were the words of three hundred slaveholders: that the imperishable glory which still gilds the rocks of Attica shone around a nation of slaveholders; that slaveholders carried the Roman eagles over the world, and bequeathed the Roman laws for the guidance of all the coming generations of Christendom. Above all, and first of all, let them reflect that a nation of slaveholders, but little more than a fourth in number of the present masters of the South, defied the power of England, and that to them we owe our independence and our Constitution. Yes, sirs, when you invade us; when, denying us the right of self-government, you seek to make of our States dependent provinces, and baptize your accursed tyranny in your brother's blood, I invite you to be bold in crime; crown it with an unheard-of infamy; choose for your battle-fields Eutaw, Guilford, New Orleans, and proclaim your conquest on the heights of Yorktown! Ay, sir, before that day comes, the blood of our men, of our women, and of our children, will have incarnadined our mighty seas and rivers, and our country shall return to primeval desolation. Such are the inevitable results of what you call peace—a peaceable enforcement of the laws,—peace! peace, such as the tiger gives to his prey. Peace, such as the old Roman gave to his conquered foes—*ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem vocant!*

But, sir, no sane man believes that we could be conquered. If we have no ships-of-war, you have vessels in abundance who would accept our letters of marque and reprisal; and the same northern capital that now engages in the slave trade could be transferred to privateering on your commerce. If we did not invade you, we could at least repel your invasion, and cut off your attacking forces. Patience alone, on our side, would insure a victory. But I will not contemplate such scenes. The gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STANTON] yesterday admitted that it was impossible, and wrong if possible, to subjugate the South, or hold her States as provinces. He agreed that war must inevitably end in permanent disunion, with the usual treaty relations between neighboring nations. In God's name, I solemnly adjure you, why not accept, without war, this which you concede must be the end of war? Is war in itself so pleasant, so desirable, or will it make our subsequent relations more advantageous? Without war, you may rebuild your Union; and if we cannot agree on the terms for that, you have at least two friendly nations. With war, you can have nothing more; nay, you will have less, for you will have two unfriendly nations. Reflect also, I pray you, that you cannot wage such a war without a revolution in your own Government, for never was a political system less suited for civil war than this. You will go into the war a Union of free Republics; you will come out a consolidated military despotism. Already the symptoms are apparent. Utterances of the public press and of public speakers, resolutions such as that recently offered by the gentleman from Illinois, [Mr. LOVEJOY,] all show the growing tendency of northern opinion for what it calls a strong Government; all show the feeling that this so-called enforcement of the laws cannot be effected without a disregard of constitutional prohibitions, and even a temporary suspension of that instrument by a military dictatorship. Evidence is not wanting that the Executive is already disorganized; that the Secretary of War is no longer responsible to the President, or the Commander-in-Chief to the Secretary; nay, that the Secretary holds his office in defiance of the Constitution, without the consent of the Senate. This city becomes a camp, and our streets are disturbed by the tramp of cavalry and the rattling of artillery. Your President is to be inaugurated at the point of the bayonet, and forts built on sites granted for the defence of southern States are garrisoned for their subjugation. The illustrious old soldier at the head of the Army, I regret to hear it said, has forgotten his allegiance to his native State, and tarnishes his laurels by devoting the last sands of his life to devising plans for her subjugation and the conquest of the South, and his military aids post with secret orders in all directions to carry out these schemes for a military revolution. Yes, sir, let the war end as it may, you will find that you have waged it at the expence of your own liberties. Would it not be better to accept without cost, at once and peaceably, all, and more than all, it can give?

What is the difficulty? The gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STANTON] says, the insults to the flag, the denial of Federal authority, the seizure of the forts; he says that the South may perhaps get out of the Union peaceably after a protracted process: but it cannot be done suddenly without war; that it is your sacred duty to maintain the authority of this Government. Now, sir, I take it that wherever a controversy is settled, each party must allow to the other the benefit of his own point of view. You regard the act of secession as an act of rebellion, and each successive step as an aggravation; but the seceding States claim that they have acted rightfully; and if they seized the forts, it was only an act of self-defence, in response to your threats of garrisoning them for purposes of coercion. If we desire a settlement, no matter of what kind, it is worse than vain to argue upon what is already done. We must take facts as they are. Four States have already seceded, as they say; rebelled, as you term it. In a few days three others will join them. A population of more than five millions, inhabiting a country of five hundred and twenty-three thousand two hundred square miles—a country twice and a half as large as France, nearly as large as the French and Austrian and Prussian empires together—utterly denies and repudiates your authority. Eight other States, seven million four hundred thousand people, in a country of three hundred and thirty thousand square

miles, deliberate whether to join them. Attempt force, and their decision is certain in the affirmative. How absurd to ignore such facts, or to treat such popular movements—movements by organized and acknowledged governments, and over so vast a scale—as rebellion; or if they be rebellion, then you are still forced to recognize it, to treat with it—by negotiation, if you are wise: by open, regular war, if you madly prefer it.

But I address myself, not to madmen or fanatics, but to sensible men. I invite them to do what proud old England did before the Revolution; what even Austria did for the Hungarians and Italians in 1848; what yourselves did for the Mormons two years since. I invite you to negotiate. First secure a truce, and then seek for terms of adjustment. Do not inquire who has been in the wrong; accept facts as they are. Let both parties allow the forts everywhere to remain in their present *status;* suspend the execution of the Federal laws in the seceding States, until otherwise ordered by Congress. You will thus prevent the possibility of present collision and the outburst of war. Then, by sending commissioners, as I proposed in a joint resolution the other day, or by other means, you may negotiate and give time for the sober second thought of the people to fix the terms of friendly adjustment, whether friendly separation or friendly reunion. Why refuse? You concede really nothing. You simply acknowledge facts, indisputable facts. Your authority is denied; the execution of your laws is suspended. You are asked merely to accept the actual condition of things as the basis of a truce, of an armistice, for negotiation. If the negotiation fail, if, at the end of the truce, you still prefer war, your condition will be just what it now is: neither party will be in a worse or a better position for the fray.

But I have strong faith that negotiations would lead to happier results. For, sir, I believe that if peace can be preserved, a reconstruction is possible and desirable. The seceding States will, of course, form a confederacy among themselves. Negotiation between such confederacy and this would soon determine the conditions of reunion, which each could submit to its several States, according to the provisions of its own Constitution. I am convinced that if the public peace is preserved, such will be the course of events, and that every day's experience will show more plainly that such is the surest and speediest way to reunion. Meantime other States—perhaps all the slaveholding States—may secede and join the southern confederacy. Virginia, for one, would desire a voice in forming that confederacy in which her lot will be ultimately cast; but this would only define more clearly what I have before indicated as the only proper basis for reconstruction—the recognition that this being now a *Union of sections*, cannot be safe or happy except as a *Union of equal sections*—equal in rights and in the power of self-protection. What the final result would be: what form the new Union would assume: whether it would be a reconstruction with a single Federal Government, on the principle of this, or whether it would be a league between separate confederacies, I know not. But this I know: that, like the present Constitution, it would be the peaceful development of natural forces: it would be the logical sequence of causes and powers long preparing in history; and such I know has been the origin of all permanent and great political organizations.

For my part, when I imagine a northern and a southern Confederacy, the one composed of slaveholding, the other of the non-slaveholding States, each homogeneous; each with a complete and independent government; each with its own line of expansion and its own internal policy, and both united by a Customs Union, by a postal treaty, and conventions to regulate patents, coins, weights and measures, and by a defensive league against all the rest of the world, I see most, if not all, the advantages of our present system without any of its evils. You would have that internal peace and free trade; that unrestricted commerce and intercourse; that consolidated strength against foreign foes, which this Constitution was designed to secure; and yet perfect independence would prevent the possibility of interference or dissension on the interests of slavery, or the recurrence of the distracting contentions it now excites. Would not such a system be preferable for all, to the present never-ending strife; to

this forced Union of discordant sections, which cannot agree to live together, except as rulers and subjects? Nay, sir, would it not be a great advance in the American idea of perfect self-government, which consists chiefly in so decentralizing and dividing the functions of government that each shall be administered by those only who have the same interest in its exercise?

The philosophic historian hereafter may remark that our infant settlements remained under the British Crown so long as its power and influence in the world were needed to protect our title to the mighty wilderness against all foreign races, and while we were as yet too few and too dispersed to unite among ourselves. He will notice that, when our numbers and intelligence qualified us to undertake the guardianship of the continent which it was our providential mission to people, our institutions assumed a new form, and we proclaimed our independence, and formed our Union. The Constitution which our forefathers made for not quite four millions of people and thirteen States on the Atlantic slope, of which twelve were slaveholding, has organized and disciplined the Anglo-Saxon host in its westward march, marking its successive encampments by the foundation of free and powerful Commonwealths. He will not wonder that this wise instrument, first designed for a small and homogeneous people in their work of colonization through the wilderness, is no longer sufficient for the numerous millions, the permanent occupants of a vast continent, who, from one have grown into two peoples, with different social systems, different pursuits, and, from the immense foreign immigration at the North, different in race; and he will regard our present travail but as the painful birth of new organic forms for nations to whom the old were no longer adapted. And he will declare that, in following the natural law of our development, and converting a close into a looser federation, our friendly relations were preserved, and a new career of mutual prosperity and power secured for either division of our race. Let not theirs be a contention with blood-stained arms, but a generous rivalry in the arts of peace; and there will open up for our name and race a new order of the ages, and a new procession of American achievement and glory.

Before Mr. GARNETT had finished his remarks, his hour having expired,

On motion of Mr. JENKINS, by unanimous consent, his time was extended five minutes.